

A S H O R T
H I S T O R Y
O F
METHODISM.



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1. **I**T is not easy to reckon up the various accounts which have been given of the people called *Methodists*: very many of them as far remote from truth, as that given by the good gentleman in *Ireland*. "*Methodists! Ay, they are the people, who "place all religion in wearing long beards."*"

2. Abundance of the mistakes which are current concerning them, have undoubtedly sprung from this: men lump together under this general name many who have no manner of connexion with each other: and then whatever any of these speaks or does, is of course imputed to all.

3. The following short account may prevent persons of a calm and candid disposition from doing this; although men of a warm or prejudiced spirit will do just as they did before. But let it be observed, this is not designed for a *Defence* of
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the *Methodists* (so called) or any part of them. It is a bare relation of a series of naked facts, which alone may remove abundance of misunderstandings.

In November 1729, some young gentlemen of Oxford, Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christchurch, Mr. Morgan, Commoner of Christchurch,³ and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College, began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading the Greek Testament. The next year, two or three of Mr. John Wesley's Pupils desired the liberty of meeting with them: and afterwards one of Mr. Charles Wesley's Pupils. It was in 1732 that Mr. Ingham, of Queen's College, and Mr. Broughton, of Exeter, were added to their number. To these, in April, was joined Mr. Clayton, of Brazen nose, with two or three of his Pupils. About the same time Mr. James Hervey was permitted to meet with them, and in 1735 Mr. Whitefield.

5. The exact regularity of their lives, as well as studies, occasioned a young Gentleman of Christchurch to say, "Here is a new set of *Methodists* sprung up:" alluding to some antient physicians who were so called. The name was new and quaint: so it took immediately, and the *Methodists* were known all over the University.

6. They were all zealous members of the Church of England, not only tenacious of all her doctrines, so far as they knew them, but of all her discipline, to the minutest circumstance. They were likewise zealous observers of all the University-Statutes, and that for conscience sake. But they observed neither these nor any thing else any further than they conceived it was bound upon them by their one book, the Bible; it being their one desire and design to be down right Bible Christians: taking the Bible, as
interpreted

interpreted by the primitive Church and our own, for their whole and sole rule.

7. The one Charge then advanced against them was, That they were *righteous overmuch*; that they were abundantly too scrupulous, and too strict, carrying things to great extremes. In particular, that they laid too much stress upon the rubrics and canons of the Church; that they insisted too much observing the statutes of the University; and that they took the Scriptures in too strict and literal a sense: so that if they were right, *few* indeed would be saved.

8. In October 1735, Mr. John and Charles Wesley, and Mr. Ingham, left England, with a design to go and preach to the *Indians* in Georgia. But the rest of the Gentlemen continued to meet, till one and another was ordained and left the University. By which means, in about two years time, scarce any of them were left.

9. In February 1738, Mr. Whitefield went over to Georgia, with a design to assist Mr. John Wesley; but Mr. Wesley just then returned to England. Soon after he had a meeting with Mess. Ingham, Stonhouse, Hall, Hutchings, Kinchin, and a few other Clergymen, who all appeared to be of one heart, as well as of one judgment, resolved to be *Bible-Christians* at all events, and, wherever they were, to preach with all their might, plain, old, Bible-Christianity.

10. They were hitherto perfectly regular in all things, and zealously attached to the Church of England. Meantime they began to be convinced, that by Grace we are saved through Faith; that Justification by Faith was the Doctrine of the Church, as well as of the Bible. As soon as they believed, they spake. Salvation by Faith being now their standing topic. Indeed this implied three things, 1. That men

men are all by nature *dead in sin*, and consequently *children of wrath*. 2. That they are *justified by faith alone*. 3. That faith produces inward and outward holiness. And these points they insisted on, day and night. In a short time, they became popular preachers. The congregations were large wherever they preached. The former name was then revived. And all these Gentlemen, with their followers were intitled *Methodists*.

11. In March 1741, Mr. *Whitefield* being returned to *England*, entirely separated from Mr. *Wesley* and his friends, "Because he did not hold the decrees." Here was the first breach, which warm men persuaded Mr. *Whitefield* to make, merely for a difference of opinion. Those indeed who believed *universal redemption*, had no desire at all to separate. But those who held *particular redemption*, would not hear of any accommodation, being determined to have no fellowship with men that "were in such dangerous errors." So there were now two sorts of *Methodists*, so called; those for *particular*, and those for *general*, redemption.

12. Not many years passed, before *William Cudworth* and *James Relly* separated from Mr. *Whitefield*. These were properly *Antinomians*, absolute, avowed enemies to the law of God, which they never preached or professed to preach, but termed all *Legalists* who did. With them, *preaching the law* was an abomination. They had *nothing to do* with the Law. They would *preach Christ*, as they called it; but without one word either of holiness or good works. Yet these were still denominated *Methodists*, although differing from Mr. *Whitefield* both in judgment and practice, abundantly more than Mr. *Whitefield* did from Mr. *Wesley*.

13. In the mean time, Mr. *Venn* and Mr. *Romaine* began to be spoken of: and not long after, Mr. *Madan* and Mr. *Berridge*, with a few other Clergymen,

Clergymen, who, although they had no connexion with each other, yet preaching *Salvation by Faith*, and endeavouring to live accordingly, to be *Bible-Christians*, were soon included in the general name of *Methodists*. And so indeed were all others who preached *Salvation by Faith*, and appeared more *serious* than their neighbours. Some of these were quiet *regular* in their manner of preaching: Some were quiet *irregular* (though not by choice; but necessity was laid upon them; they must preach *irregularly*, or not at all :) and others were between both; *regular* in *most*, though not in *all* particulars.

14. In 1762, *George Bell*, and a few other persons, began to speak great words. In the latter end of the year, they foretold, that the world would be at an end on the 28th of *February*. Mr. *Wesley*, with whom they were then connected, withstood them both in public and private. This they would not endure: so, in *January* and *February* 1763, they separated from him, under the care of Mr. *Maxfield*, one of Mr. *Wesley's* Preachers. But still Mr. *Maxfield* and his adherents, even the wildest *Enthusiasts* among them, go under the general name of *Methodists*, and so bring a scandal upon those with whom they have no connexion.

15. At present, those who remain with Mr. *Wesley*, are mostly *Church of England* men. They love her Articles, her Homilies, her Liturgy, her Discipline, and unwillingly vary from it in any instance. Meantime, all who preach among them declare, *we are all by nature children of wrath*. But *by grace we are saved through Faith*: saved both from the guilt and from the power of sin. They endeavour to *live* according to what they preach, to be plain, *Bible-Christians*. And they meet together at convenient times, to encourage one another therein. They tenderly love many that are *Calvinists*, though they do not love their opinions. Yea, they love the *Antinomians* themselves; but it is with
a love

love of compassion only, for they hate their doctrines with a perfect hatred; they abhor them as they do hell-fire: being convinced nothing can so effectually destroy all faith, all holiness, and all good works.

16. With regard to these, Mr. Relly and his adherents, it would not be strange, if they should grow into reputation. For they will never shock the world, either by the harshness of their doctrine, or the singularity of their behaviour. But let those who determine both to preach and to live the gospel, expect that men will say all manner of evil of them. *The servant is not above his Master, nor the disciple above his Lord. If then they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?* It is their duty indeed, as much as lieth in them, to live peaceably with all men. But when they labour after peace, the world will make themselves ready for battle. It is their constant endeavour, to please all men, for their good, to edification. But yet they know, it cannot be done. They remember the word of the Apostle, *If I yet please men, I am not the servant of Christ.* They go on therefore, through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report: desiring only, that their Master may say in that day, "Servants of God, well done."

